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LETTER DATED 14 JULY 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement issued on 14 July 1998 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation concerning events in Gali district in Abkhazia, Georgia.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) S. LAVROV

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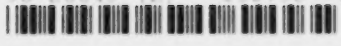

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Annex

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation has been authorized to state the following.

On 12 July 1998 at 2000 hours, five Russian military personnel serving in the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States were killed by terrorists: Senior Lieutenant Roman Genrikhovich Bersenev, Junior Sergeant Evgeny Nikolaevich Khazov, Junior Sergeant Maksim Gennadyevich Biryukov, Private Vladislav Alekseevich Obaskin and Private Vladislav Nikolaevich Goloshchapov. Three servicemen were wounded.

For over four years, a Russian military contingent has been carrying out a peacekeeping mission in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict zone in accordance with the mandate of the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States; the contingent has supported the ceasefire regime, thereby facilitating the talks between the parties to the conflict concerning the return of refugees and a political settlement.

The Russian peacekeepers have carried out and are continuing to carry out their duties in an appropriate manner. Owing to the measures taken by the peacekeepers, the clashes that took place in Gali district in May 1998 were contained and did not escalate into large-scale hostilities.

However, in the absence of progress in the talks, the terrorist activities of extremist forces in Gali district are increasing, and Russian peacekeepers are the targets of such terrorism.

The sides are not fulfilling their obligations under the Gagra Protocol of 25 May 1998. Thus, the Abkhaz side has not created conditions for "the return of the civilian population of Gali district, which fled as a result of the fighting". As for the Georgian side, under the Gagra Protocol it assumed the obligation to "take effective steps to halt the infiltration into Abkhazia of terrorist and subversive groups and armed formations and individuals".

There has recently been a growing number of pronouncements and statements, particularly by leaders of the Georgian Parliament, in support of the guerrillas of the "White Legion", who a few days ago made direct threats against the Russian peacekeepers. All attempts to portray the "White Legion" or the "Forest Brethren" as organizations that have no link to, and are not directly controlled by, Georgian security services are absolutely contrary to reality.

The statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of State Security of Georgia concerning the terrorist attack on Russian peacekeepers on 12 June 1998 is a source of indignation. It does not contain a single word of condolence in connection with the deaths of the young servicemen, while the peacekeepers and their command are blatantly and groundlessly accused of encouraging violence.

We resolutely condemn the crime perpetrated against the Russian peacekeepers, who are risking their lives for the sake of peace and stability in the region, and we demand that effective measures be taken to halt the terrorist activities of the "White Legion" and the "Forest Brethren".

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation once again stresses the inadmissibility of the unauthorized introduction of armed formations into the security zone, which is controlled by the peacekeeping forces.

With a view to ensuring the safety of its personnel, the command of the peacekeepers has been instructed to take measures to neutralize terrorist groups in both sectors of the security zone, to which the mandate of the Collective Peacekeeping Forces applies.

We give notice to the sides that, if terrorist acts against Russian peacekeepers persist, we shall consider the advisability of their continued presence in the conflict zone.